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ABSTRACT

Responding to the need for a comprehensive framework for monitoring and improving school effectiveness in local and international contexts, this paper presents the findings of a case study of one effective and one ineffective school. Data were derived from a survey of schools, document analysis, and field observations. The case schools are outliers of a large-scale research project that examined educational quality in 252 Hong Kong primary schools. This paper focuses on the following aspects: (1) general school characteristics; (2) student performance; (3) curriculum delivery; (4) classroom climate; (5) teacher satisfaction and attitudes; (6) staff relationship; (7) principal leadership; (8) parental influence; and (9) organizational characteristics. The profiles of each school differed in terms of student, teacher, and organizational performance. Although the two schools shared demographic and background characteristics and received the same level of government funding, they differed in most of the effectiveness criteria and process indicators at the individual, group, and school levels. Three tables are included. (Contains 34 references.) (LMI)

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# A Multi-level and Multi-criteria Perspective of School Effectiveness: A Case Study

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# A Multi-level and Multi-criteria Perspective of School Effectiveness: A Case Study

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( abstract )

Responding to the need for a comprehensive framework for monitoring and improving school effectiveness in local and international contexts, this paper aims to present the findings of a case study of one effective school and one ineffective school from a multi-level and multi-criteria perspective.

The case schools are outliers of a large scale research project on " Education Quality in Hong Kong Primary Schools", selected with the criteria of students' academic achievements, attitudes in school, and satisfactions in school. The profiles of these two schools are contrastingly different in terms of student performance, teacher performance, and organizational performance at different levels. The two schools, though with comparable demographic and background characteristics and same funding level from the Government, are different in most of effectiveness criteria and process indicators at the individual, group, and school levels. The findings provide a clear pattern for school improvement practice and implications for school effectiveness research.

Currently, Hong Kong is rapidly developing in nearly every aspect of its society including economic, political, cultural, and social aspects. The political transition of its sovereignty from Britain to China further accelerates the changes and developments in Hong Kong. During the past decade, a number of education policies had been issued to improve school education to meet the challenges from changing education environment (Education Commission, 1982-1992). The understanding of the characteristics of effective and ineffective schools in such a changing background may make an important contribution to the ongoing policy discussion and reforms in both local and international contexts. This paper aims to explore the contrasting characteristics of effective and ineffective Hong Kong primary schools and advance implications for school improvement and reform.

## The Hong Kong Education System

In order to help the international audience understand the background of the case study, it would be necessary to introduce briefly the education system in Hong Kong. Based the information of Government Information Office (1994), some main features of Hong Kong education system are summarized as follows: The formal educational opportunities in Hong Kong "encompass kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools (including technical and prevocational schools), technical institutes, and tertiary level institutions. The great majority of places in primary, secondary, and tertiary education are provided either free or at highly-subsidized rates. All kindergarten provision is in the private sector. Other areas with strong private support include international schools and schools providing language, computer and business courses. All children are required by law to be in full-time education between the ages of six and fifteen" (p. 129). The core of the education system is thus formed by the primary and secondary schools. However, there is a large demand for formal education both before and after universal education. "Pre-school education begins for most children in a kindergarten, at the age of three. Primary school begins at the age of six, and lasts for six years. At about twelve, children progress to a three-year course of junior secondary education in a grammar, prevocational or technical school. After Secondary three, most stay on for a two-year senior secondary course leading to the first public examination, the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE). Others join a full-time craft course of vocational training; while a small number choose to leave formal education at this point" (p.129). Following the HKCEE, opportunities for progression include a two-year sixth form course leading to the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE); two or three-year vocational courses leading to a certificate or diploma; and a three-year course of teacher training. After the HKALE,

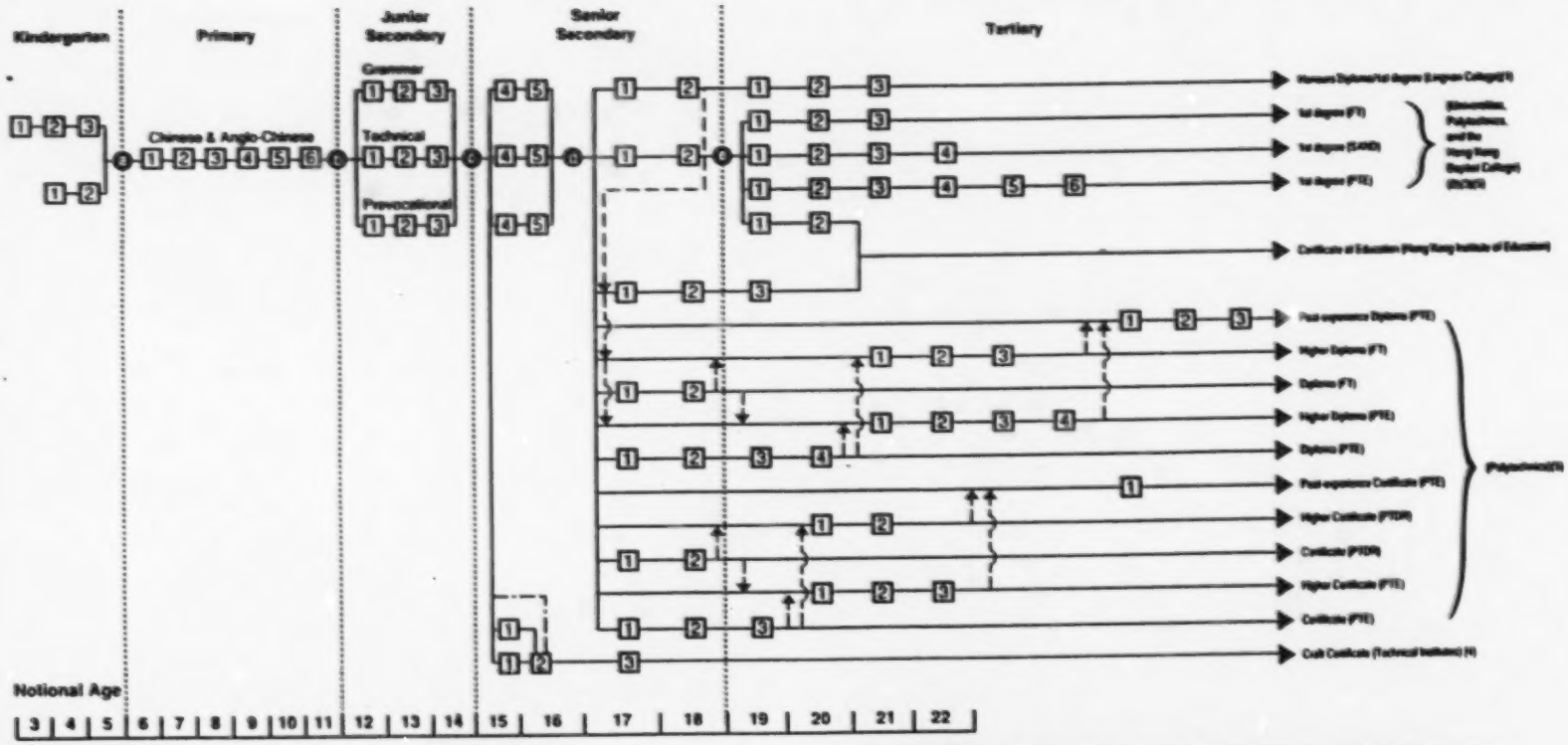
students may gain "a place on a degree or diploma course, or on a course of teacher training normally lasting two years. Those leaving full-time education at the end of the senior secondary or sixth form course have opportunities for part-time study or vocational training all the way up to degree level"(pp.129-130).

"Most educational provision is in the public sector, the government directly manages only a small proportion of primary and secondary schools. Most are operated by non-profit-making voluntary organizations receiving public funds under a code of aid. Tertiary institutions (except for the self-funding Open Learning Institute) are autonomous statutory bodies receiving public funds through the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC). A comprehensive system of technical education and vocational training is provided, with public funds, by the statutory Vocational Training Council (VTC)" (p.130). The Hong Kong education system of 1994 can be illustrated as shown in Figure.1 ( Education Department, 1994).

From 1984 to 1992, the Education Commission published five reports including a number of policies to change and improve the Hong Kong education system. Particularly, after undertaking an overall review of the curriculum and behavioral issues related to the nine year of free and compulsory education, the fourth report (Education Commission, 1990) recommended a range of measures to improve the quality of school education through changing the curriculum development machinery, strengthening the guidance, providing counseling and remedial services to students, and establishing special schools to cater for the needs of children at both ends of the ability spectrum. Other major recommendations include the introduction of a framework of targets and target related assessment during key stages of children's schooling, further initiatives to improve language and subject teaching in schools and plans for enabling primary children to enjoy whole day schooling. Furthermore, the fifth report (Education Commission, 1992) recommended some measures to improve teacher quality and performance and reform teacher education. The recommendations include the integration of the Institute of Language in Education (ILE) and the four colleges of Education into an autonomous Institute of Education, upgrading about 35% of primary teaching posts to graduate status within 15 years, reducing the workloads and improving the career paths of teachers; reducing the class size in both primary and secondary schools; and improving school environment and promoting teacher professionalism.

In 1991, Education and Manpower Branch and Education Department (1991) issued a new policy aiming at enhancing school effectiveness through shifting schools in the public sector from the external control management mode to the school-based management mode (Cheng, 1993 a ).

This ongoing school management reform will bring about important impacts on school performance in a long run.




Note: (1) The Hong Kong Shue Yan College, an Assisted Approved Post Secondary College, offers 4 year courses, the minimum entry requirement of which, in terms of the Post Secondary Colleges Regulations, is successful completion of Secondary 5.
(2) 1st degree in medicine requires 5 years of study.
(3) B.A. (Bldg.) requires 4 years of study while B.A. (Arch.) and M.B.B.S. require 5 years of study.
(4) Student with craft certificate may enrol in the Technician Course after the completion of a bridging course which lasts for a minimum of one year.
(5) The mode of attendance and duration of study of some courses may vary.

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*Figure 1: The Hong Kong Education System (1994)*

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The cases presented in this paper, one effective school and one ineffective school, were identified from the data set of the "Education Quality in Hong Kong Primary Schools" research project led by Y.C. Cheng. The data set of a survey conducted in 1994 involved a sample of 252 primary schools ( about 25 % of the school population) in Hong Kong. The effectiveness criteria for identifying these schools are (1) student's attitudes in school (including self concept, attitudes to school, teachers, peers, and learning); (2) student's satisfactions in school ( including intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction, social satisfaction, and overall satisfaction); and (3) student's academic achievements in the public examination ( including Chinese language, English language, and Mathematics). To a great extent, these criteria may represent the cognitive, affective and behavior dimensions of students' educational outcomes. We believe they are comprehensive and powerful in identifying effective and ineffective schools. Based on these criteria, a number of schools were identified as effective schools and ineffective schools. In order to minimize the difference in contextual factors and their potential influence in the comparison, only effective school ABC and ineffective school XYZ with very similar demographic characteristics were chosen for case studies. Of course, the school names and other names given in this paper are pseudonyms in order to protect the identity of the schools and their staff.

The case studies were conducted mainly in two stages: one in June of 1994 and the other in February and March of 1995. The sources of information for these case studies include school records, field observations, personal discussion, and questionnaire survey. The principal, all teachers, and all the grade 6 students in these two schools had been involved in the study. Also some key persons ( e.g. school managers, school council members, heads of other schools, district inspectors, etc. ) of the same school sponsoring body or the community who were familiar with the sampled schools had been contacted by the researcher to discuss, clarify, and validate some data and results of the study. The focus of the case study in this paper was on the following aspects: (1) general characteristics of the schools; (2) student performance; (3) curriculum delivery; (4) classroom climate; (5) teacher satisfactions and attitudes; (6) staff relationship; (7) principal leadership; (8) parental influence; and (9) organizational characteristics. The study compared these aspects between the effective school and ineffective school and investigated how these aspects contribute to the effectiveness of school functioning.

## General Characteristics of the Schools

In Hong Kong, there are basically three types of primary schools; namely, government school, aided school and private school. The two schools in the present study are aided primary schools. Financially, they are supported by the central government and administratively they are managed by their sponsoring body and their respective school management committees. They are co-educational and operated by the same Catholic school sponsoring body. Their demographic characteristics are quite similar, as shown in Table 1. Their school ages are 26 and 27 respectively. They are located in two old urban districts in Kowloon -- the opposite side of the Hong Kong Island. Both districts are old and with decreasing young population. The people living there are moderately low in SES. The two school principals also estimated that over 80% of their students come from lower or middle class families.

The surrounding environment of the two schools is rather unfavorable for learning. ABC School, the effective school, is surrounded by old buildings and a market. Recreational facilities for children and youths are limited in the district. Apart from this, the school is facing flyovers and a highway which lead to other new towns. The heavy traffic and the noise of buying and selling activities in and around the market put the school in the mist of disgusting noises which inevitably affect the learning of students. The ineffective school, XYZ School, is a bit lucky. It is surrounded by low cost housing buildings provided by the Government. Though there are shops and supermarkets around, the noise level is relatively lower than that experienced by ABC School. Since XYZ school was built inside the Government designed public housing estate, there are a number of community recreational facilities for students. Thus, in terms of surrounding environment, XYZ School is at a more advantageous position than ABC School.

Both schools are operated in bi-sessional mode. ABC School operates in the afternoon from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. while XYZ School runs in the morning from 7:40 a.m. to 12:50 p.m. Operating in this mode, they share their school building with the other session headed by a different principal. Apart from this, they also share teaching aids and other resources including clerical support staffs. Normally, in the territory, a standard school ( with standard school building and facilities) has a maximum of 24 classes and around 960 students. It is clear that for even though ABC school and XYZ school are a standard school, the enrollment of ABC School is above target (1,200 students) and that of XYZ School is lower ( 884 students). In an old district with decreasing

student population, the enrollment figure often becomes a very critical indicator showing the degree to which a school is preferable in the community.

**Table 1**

***Summary of the Basic Demographic Characteristics of the Schools***

| Demographic Characteristics | ABC School ( Effective ) | XYZ School ( Ineffective ) |
|---|---|---|
| Location | Old district | Old district |
| Funding | Government Aided | Government Aided |
| School Age | 26 years | 27 years |
| School Building | Designed and Built by School Sponsoring Body | Standard School Built by Government |
| Mode of Operation | Afternoon School | Morning School |
| No. of Teachers | 37 | 33 |
| No. of Classes | 30 | 26 |
| No. of Students | 1,200 | 884 |
| Average Class Size | 40 | 34 |
| SES of Students | Moderately Low | Moderately Low |

To sum up, the above brief description of the general school characteristics reveals that

(1) both ABC School and XYZ School are rather similar demographically in terms of location, funding, sponsoring body, school age, mode of operation and SES of students; and

(2) even though XYZ School is at a more advantageous position in terms of school surrounding, class size (34), and school hours (i.e. morning session is generally preferable), the larger enrollment of ABC school may indicate that it is more preferable to the parents.

In old districts with decreasing student population, there is often serious competition for student enrollment among primary schools. If the enrollment of a school is decreasing, the government funding will be correspondingly reduced until the school cannot be maintained any more. In terms of school survival, ABC school seems to be more effective even though its physical environment may not be so strong as XYZ school ( Cheng, in press a ). It would be interesting to

investigate further why and how ABC school is more attractive in its community. According to the findings of questionnaires and school records and the information from the key persons of the community (such as heads of other schools, school managers, and school inspectors), the better students' educational outcomes of ABC school should be one of the major factors contributing to its attractiveness in the community. It will be elaborated in the next section.

**Student Performance**

Traditionally, the discussion of school effectiveness evaluation is often too narrowed on the students' academic achievements. Yet, if we believe school education for students should be holistic to facilitate students' all round developments, apart from their academic achievements, their attitudes and satisfactions in school should be crucial factors in discussing school effectiveness (Cheng, 1994a, c). These factors also reflect the quality of school life students are experiencing. Therefore, it would be interesting to compare student performance in terms of academic achievements, attitudes and satisfactions in school between ABC school and XYZ school. The grade 6 students' academic achievements in Chinese Language, English Language, and Mathematics in the Hong Kong Attainment Tests can be used to compare these two schools. According to the past studies, the study of students' attitudes in school may include those positive attitudes towards personal self, class peers, teachers, the school and their learning (e.g. Chan, Chan, Cheung, Ngan & Yeung, 1992; Cheng, 1994a, c ; Cheng & Ng, 1991). The study of students' satisfactions in school may include social satisfaction, intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic satisfaction and overall satisfaction. Social satisfaction refers to the students' satisfaction with their social relations in school; intrinsic satisfaction is related to their opportunities to perform and learn; extrinsic satisfaction is associated to students' satisfaction with various school arrangements; and the overall satisfaction is the degree of satisfaction of the students with the overall learning life in school (Cheng, 1994b, c; Cammann, et al., 1983).

**ABC School**

*Academic Achievement*. As shown in Table 2, the average academic achievements of students in ABC school were very high with school means: 69.88 on Chinese Language, 57.29 on English Language, and 25.39 on Mathematics. They are considerably higher than the Hong Kong means (i.e. 65.10, 48.28, and 22.13) and much higher than those of XYZ school. Particularly, the students' English Language achievement was outstandingly good. According to the principal, the

results of the academic attainment tests of their primary six students were always above the Hong Kong means. On top of this, the overall academic achievement of their graduates stayed always at the top 40% of the whole population of primary six graduates in Hong Kong.

**Table 2**

***Student Academic Achievement of ABC School and XYZ School***

| Subject | Hong Kong Means | ABC School Means | XYZ School Means |
|---|---|---|---|
| Chinese Language | 65.10 | 69.88 | 51.19 |
| English Language | 48.28 | 57.29 | 30.93 |
| Mathematics | 22.13 | 25.39 | 14.30 |

*Students' Attitude and Satisfaction.* From the findings of questionnaire survey of all grade 6 students, students in ABC school seemed to have positive self concept, possess good attitude to peers, be respectful to teachers, and love their school and learning. Generally, they perceived themselves as competent and optimistic. They believed that they could accomplish their own standard as well as those set by their teachers in work. They had harmonious relationships with classmates. Most of them worked together cooperatively and shared with each other their resources, such as books and pencils. During recess, students played happily with peers and very few students were lonely. Many of them also crowded around teachers who were on duty during play time. Many of the students viewed that they loved the school and their teachers. Another phenomenon observed was that students loved reading. This validated the general impression that students had a positive attitude towards learning.

Regarding students' satisfactions, the views collected from students suggested that they were satisfied with the arrangement of the school, the relationship with members of the school, and the available opportunities for them to exhibit their talents. When asked if they would quit schooling, they answered "no". Though, some students held relatively negative view concerning homework overload, the overall impression of student attitudes was rather positive.

**XYZ School**

*Academic Achievements.* As shown in Table 2, the average academic achievements of grade 6 students in XYZ school were very low ( 51.19 on Chinese language, 30.93 on English Language, and 14.30 on Mathematics). They were much lower than the Hong Kong means and extremely lower than those of ABC school.

*Students' Attitudes and Satisfactions.* According to the self-report of students, students in XYZ school tended to have attitudes towards self, peers, teachers, school and learning not as positive as those in ABC School. Some students had rather negative self conception of themselves. A few even viewed themselves as "useless" and "unhappy". They reported to have good relationships with classmates. Cheerful play relationship between peers especially during recess was clear. Students indicated that they treasured their recess. They played with peers and felt relaxed after "boring" lessons. Their attitudes to teachers and school were two areas found to be rather negative. General observations suggested that students did not approach teachers actively. Some students had a fear of their teachers. In their eyes, teachers were serious and would easily get "annoyed". Teacher-student relationship was generally distant. Moreover, quite a number of the school's arrangements did not satisfy them. These included school facilities like playground, washrooms, recess time and plantations. Classroom environment was another source of dis-satisfaction. They complained that the ventilation was not good; the chairs and desks were rather old and worn out; and the learning environment was not comfortable in summer due to the lack of air conditioning. These complains and dis-satisfaction about the physical environment of classroom and school were also shared by teachers.

As described in the previous section, the physical environment of the effective school ABC was even worse than XYZ school. However, it was noted that complains of the same kind was not so acute in ABC School. We found that students of ABC school had generally a more positive attitude to school arrangements and environment and were more satisfied than students in XYZ School. This difference, according to observations, may come from the schools' effort to maintain existing equipment and facilities. ABC School's equipment and facilities, though old, were in good conditions; while some of XYZ School were not. This maintenance effort minimized the detrimental effect of out-dated facilities; and would thus provide a more favorable learning environment to students. This practice is exceedingly critical for schools which have been established for a long time like these two.

As a whole, student performance (in terms of academic achievements, attitudes and satisfactions in school) of ABC School was far better than that of XYZ School. The findings were consistent with the effectiveness criteria used to classify them as effective and ineffective.

**Curriculum Delivery**

The curriculum taught in ABC School and XYZ School was basically the same. In Hong Kong, primary schools follow a common core curriculum. The subjects taught are normally English Language, Chinese Language, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Health Education, Art & Craft, Music, and Physical Education. Religious Education is also offered in religious schools. Variations in curriculum among schools are small. In view of this, the discussion on this area will not be dealt with separately.

Teaching is generally done conventionally in classroom. Teacher talk or teacher-centered approach is the main feature of classroom teaching. This phenomenon was evident in both schools. In many schools, the teaching of grade 1 to 4 is conducted in "Activity Approach". General observation of this approach is that students sit in groups and teacher talk is still dominant. The majority of class activities are conventional teaching. Due to physical and resource constraints (e.g. class size, teacher-student ratio), an ideal form of activity based learning environment is normally not possible. XYZ School in the present study adopted exactly this form of teaching. At its junior level, "Activity Approach" was employed, while at the senior level (grades 5 & 6) conventional teaching was adopted. On the other hand, ABC School used conventional classroom teaching at all levels.

Another characteristics of curriculum delivery in Hong Kong is that a considerable portion of classroom teaching time at grade 5 and 6 (the last two year of elementary schooling) in many schools are allocated to train students in verbal and numerical reasoning. These two areas of students' capability are tested by the central education authority for the purpose of secondary school place allocation. Curriculum delivered in this way has a general feature of allocating not sufficient time for cultural subjects like art & craft, music and physical education. This phenomenon was also observed in ABC School and XYZ School.

Extra-curricular activities were also organized for students in the two schools. However, there was a great difference in terms of student participation. ABC School organized 20 different types of extra-curricular activities for students yearly. The school principal revealed that 80% of students participated. In XYZ School, 14 types were offered with 60% of students participated.

Student participation of the two schools in inter-school competitions/functions were also different. The students of ABC School participated in 20 different competitions/ functions; and won 102 prizes. However, XYZ School sent students to participate in only 9 events; and won 5 prizes.

From the above we see that the delivery of formal curriculum in the two schools was rather uniform in terms of subjects and methodology. However, when extra-curricular activities were concerned, the quality and quantity of student participation of ABC School were far better than those of XYZ School. In other words, students in ABC school might have a better opportunity to experience quality education in extra-curricular activities. Also, students of ABC School reported that they were proud of the school and themselves. This might validate the previously described students' attitudes and satisfactions in school.

## Classroom Climate

School is a social system including different types of social interactions that can influence the performance of principal, teachers and students ( Halpin & Croft, 1963; Cheng, 1991). Inside the school, the classroom is a crucial social environment that affects student performance and so educational outcomes (Fraser & Walberg, 1991; Cheng, 1994a). The study of classroom climate is therefore essential to our understanding of effective school practice.

According to Moos & Tricket (1974), Bass (1981), French & Raven (1968) and Cheng (1994a), the major aspects of classroom climate to be examined may include the social interactions among students and teachers and also the power bases that the teacher or teacher use to influence student compliance in classroom. Social interactions in classroom may include affiliation, involvement, task orientation, competition, order and organization, rule clarity, teaching innovation, teacher support and teacher control (Moos & Tricket, 1974). Power base refers to the use of reward power, coercive power, position power, personal power or professional power in class (French & Raven, 1968; Cheng, 1994a). In these two case studies, only classrooms of grade 6 students were observed.

### ABC School

Before describing the observed classroom climate, it is useful to have some background information about the physical classroom environment. ABC School is an old school. Basically, all furniture items in classrooms were old. However, they were well maintained. Its classrooms were

not air conditioned. Therefore, it was rather hot in classrooms during summer. Since the external environment was quite noisy, all classrooms were exposed to a high level of noise when windows needed to be open to have better ventilation during summer. This may have inevitably negative impacts on the learning environment.

*Climate among Students.* Affiliation of students was close. Students reported that they had a good understanding of each other and were closely related both in classes and after lessons. Cooperation and mutual help in classes were evident. This validated the observations of their positive attitudes towards each other and their high level of social satisfaction reported in the last section. Apart from this good affiliation, the academic competition and involvement in class learning were also healthy. Students reported that they experienced a moderate competition pressure for good academic achievement. Though they were keen to obtain higher grades in their studies, they did not want to hurt the good relationship with their peers. This explained why competition was not acutely high. Tied to this, they did not also have high level of concentration in classes as one might expect for high academic achievers. Undesirable behaviors in classes, though not frequent, were also reported. However, this did not interfere into their normal learning. Such behaviors in the researcher's eyes were acceptable and normal. After all the students were all around the age of 11. One could not expect them to remain sitting in a traditional classroom for hours without signs of "side-track behavior". In general, classroom climate among grade 6 students in this school was considered to be rather positive and in harmony.

*Climate between Teacher and Students.* Teacher support was dominant in the interaction between teacher and students in classes. Students reported that teachers were helpful and sympathetic. Teachers were sensitive to their needs and were ready to render help when approached. It was inferred that the good affiliation and relationship among students might be modeled from teachers' supportive behavior. Though, teachers were helpful and sympathetic, they did not give way easily when there stood a chance for students to violate classroom rules. Strong teacher control was also exhibited. Moreover, according to reports from students, rules and regulations were very clear. Whenever, students were punished, the teacher explained clearly why they deserved punishment. Due to the big class size of 40, teachers in Hong Kong are in general inclined to have very strict rules and regulations in classes. It could be understood that without rules and regulations, a class of 40 might not be manageable to create a positive learning environment for all.

Regarding the lessons, students indicated that they were normally quite interesting. Teachers gave out instructions steps by steps and were easy to follow. Observations supported this. It was the new ideas and arrangements from teachers that kept students to have this view. In short, the classroom climate between teachers and students were good for learning in the Hong Kong context. First, discipline problems were minimized by clear rules and strong teacher control. Further, the design and conduct of learning activities were systematic and interesting. Working in parallel with these was the strong teacher support and sympathetic guidance in classes. This combination of rules and support create a nurturing environment for students to learn productively and teachers to teach effectively.

*Teacher Power Base.* In students' eyes, they comply with their teachers because they frequently helped them solve problems in studies and improved greatly their academic achievement and because they were their superiors as a teacher. This might be a result of teachers' exercise of strict control and rules in class. In this sense, teachers had successfully built their position power. However, when asked more specifically, students further viewed that they respected their teachers because they were their models. Judging from this, their personal qualities as teachers and respectful adults were also crucial. Thus, in addition to professional power and position power, personal power was the third source of teacher power in classes. Since teachers were supportive and sympathetic, it would be natural to see teachers in this school exercise their coercive power less frequently. Students reported that teachers did not punish them often. If punishments were administered, students normally understood and accepted the reasons behind. It is interesting to note that students did not report their compliance with their teachers mainly due to the extrinsic rewards from teachers.

**XYZ School**

Basically, observations indicated that students and teachers in XYZ school were generally not satisfied with the physical environment of their classroom. Besides this, the noise level and the ventilation problem in summer were more or less the same as ABC School. With both students and teachers not satisfied, it would be not difficult to estimate the possible negative impacts on students' learning.

*Climate among Students.* Comparing to ABC School, affiliation of students seemed to be relatively distant even though grade 6 students in XYZ school still indicated that they had fairly good relationship. Only little academic competition among students in class. Students reported that

they did not have high level of concentration and involvement in class learning. Undesirable behavioral problems in classes happened often. When compared to ABC School, the frequency of handling student behavior problems was relatively high. Teachers of ABC School indicated that in average around 75% of class time was used for normal teaching and less than 25% for handling student behavior problems and other non-teaching activities. On the other hand, 25% to 50% of class time for handling student behavior was reported by teachers of XYZ School. Of course, this had negative impacts on the normal learning in classes. In short, we see that in XYZ school, the classroom climate among students lacked the kind of atmosphere that drove the students towards academic excellence.

*Climate between Teacher and Students.* Students did not perceived teachers so helpful and supportive when compared with those in ABC school. The questionnaire data obtained from students validated this observation. Teachers in XYZ school might at times gave way when students violated classroom rules. Further, as reported by students rules and regulations were sometimes not clear. Teachers might occasionally give not enough explanations to students when they were punished for undesirable behavioral problems. Lessons as reported by students were very often not interesting. This was quite contradictory to the observations in ABC School. Teachers instructions were perceived by students as difficult to follow and sometimes not systematic. New ideas and designs of learning activities were not evident. To sum up, the classroom climate between teachers and students were not as good as ABC School. First, discipline problems occurred rather frequent and without clear rules and strong teacher control, good learning atmosphere could not be achieved. Coupled with the lack of innovation and organization of lessons, negative impact on students' learning in classes. This might explain why often students were not concentrated in classes.

*Teacher Power Base.* Teachers, in students' eyes, had a supreme power as teachers. Students comply with their teachers mainly because they were their superiors but not so much because they could help them in learning. It was rather different from ABC School. To students' perception, teachers in XYZ school exercised coercive power relatively more when compared to those in ABC School. It would not be strange to see this happened in a negative learning environment. Teachers under such circumstances might tend to use punishments to keep peace and order in classes.

The above observations suggest that the classroom climate in effective school ABC was in general more positive than that in ineffective school XYZ.

According to Cammann et al. (1983) and Cheng (1994b), teachers' work performance in these two case studies may be observed in terms of their job satisfactions and job attitudes/feelings. Specifically, job satisfactions may include social satisfaction (related to the social relationship with colleagues), extrinsic satisfaction (related to the salary or benefits provided by school), intrinsic satisfaction (related to the opportunities to develop and learn), and influence satisfaction (related to the opportunities to participate in decision-making and be autonomous). Job attitudes/feelings may include the commitment to the job, feelings of job challenge, job meaningfulness, and job responsibility ( Cammann et al., 1983).

**ABC School**

In ABC school, teachers generally viewed that they were satisfied with the social relationships with colleagues. Teachers also showed high level of intrinsic satisfaction and reported that they had chances to work on meaningful tasks and develop themselves professionally. They showed moderate satisfaction with opportunities for them to participate in school decision making and be autonomy on their professional matters. The promotion prospect and extrinsic rewards of teachers in Hong Kong were generally fixed since the salary of teachers was fixed to a standard scale and the number of promotion posts was fixed at a ratio of around 4 teachers to 1 senior teacher. In this well established school, senior posts were all filled up and the only extrinsic reward would possibly be salary. Furthermore, as described previously, the physical environment of this school was quite unfavorable. This might explain why there was not so high level of teachers' extrinsic satisfaction when compared with other satisfactions in ABC school.

The level of job commitment was not as high as we might expect. Some teachers reported that they did not have the drive to maximize their work output. A few teachers indicated that they might choose to work in another school. This might be due to the high work tension in this school for students' success in learning. Even so, majority of the teachers still expressed that they found the work challenging and meaningful. They also viewed that they had the responsibility to provide good education service to students. Generally, they reported that they had already input great efforts into their work.

From the above, we could see that teachers in ABC School were generally rather positive in work. Their intrinsic satisfaction might due to the good students' educational outcomes. They could easily see their effort rewarded through producing high quality students. That might explain

why they found their job meaningful and challenging. In fact when teachers had these attitudes and satisfactions, they would have positive influence on students' learning. In turn, the encouraging students' educational outcomes would reinforce teachers to work even harder and be more satisfied. In this way, this "mutual positive influence" between teachers and students continued and the school could then be expected to move towards excellence.

**XYZ School**

Compared with the effective school ABC, teachers in the ineffective school XYZ reported very low job satisfaction in nearly every aspect. In general, they were not satisfied with the social relationship among their colleagues. They did not enjoy the nature of their teaching job and so they were not satisfied with very limited chances to have professional development. Obviously their intrinsic satisfaction was poor. Compared with ABC school, teachers in this school were dissatisfied with few opportunities to participate in school decision making and external benefits and awards available in school. Teachers reported that they did not have the spirit to invest more effort in work. Cases of intending to quit the job were also observed. However, the researchers also observed that some teachers still viewed their work as moderately challenging and responsibility bearing. Generally, they reported that they had already input great efforts into their work, yet in vein. This showed that teachers to a certain extent felt helpless in work.

From the above, we could see that very different from the teachers in ABC School, teachers in XYZ school were generally not satisfied with their work. In fact when teachers were not satisfied and felt helpless, they would inevitably have negative impact on students' learning. In turn, the discouraging students' educational outcomes would reinforce teachers to work even in a more helpless way and be more dissatisfied. Thus, this "mutual negative influence" between teachers and students continued and the school might become ineffective.

**Staff Relationship**

Based on the conceptions of Halpin & Croft (1963), Cheng (1992, 1994b), and Chan, Cheng & Hau (1991), staff relationship in the two schools were studied in terms of intimacy, esprit, disengagement and hindrance among staff and principal-teachers relationship. Intimacy refers to the extent to which teachers are closely related in school. Esprit is the morale developed through accomplishment and satisfaction in work. Hindrance is the extent to which teachers are burdened by unnecessary work, rules and regulations. Disengagement is the extent to which

teachers feel that other teachers are annoying, irritating, and disengaged in school activities. Principal-teacher relationship refers to the degree of teachers' satisfaction with the social and working relationship with the principal.

**ABC School**

*Relationship among Teachers.* The observed level of intimacy and esprit among teachers was high in ABC school. Teachers generally treated colleagues as close friends and not merely as work partners in school. Different informal groups were found in this school. As reported by teachers, the relationship between these groups was "peaceful". Conflicting views were not surfaced. In social gatherings, teachers from different informal groups enjoyed cheerfully with members from the other groups as well as their own close colleagues. Disengagement among teachers was not common, though few teachers viewed that they experienced the feeling of being disengaged. Regarding their work morale, it was generally perceived to be very high. Observation also supported this. Teachers viewed that they were full of energy in teaching. Discussions in staff meetings were normally focused on how to provide good quality education to students. In short, a working atmosphere of high esprit and close relationship was evident.

Another interesting observation in this school was that teachers generally experienced a moderate level of hindrance. Tracing the causes, teachers further viewed that they sometimes had a over burdened feeling of clerical work. In Hong Kong, teachers were expected to take care of quite a lot of administrative work regarding student admissions, students' applications for subsidies of public transportation, reporting students' demographic data to the central education authority and the alike. These would inevitably induce considerable clerical work which teachers might consider as unnecessary. Moreover, what was specific to this school was that the school head exhibited a strong structural leadership. For example, he required records to be complete and systematic. This might require more clerical input from teachers. All the above explained why teachers experienced the feeling of being hindered in teaching. Luckily, the level of hindrance was not very high.

*Principal-Teacher Relationship.* The relationship between teachers and the principal was rather good. Teachers were satisfied with the present established administrative structure and related operational procedures. Though they wanted to have more participation in school policy decision making, they viewed that the present practice was acceptable. They were generally cooperative in carrying out policies and plans directed from the principal. In sum, both the principal and teachers were satisfied with the social and working relationship.

**XYZ School**

*Relationship among Teachers.* Very contradictory to the observation in ABC School, the degree of intimacy and esprit was moderately low. Teachers treated colleagues as close friends only in their informal groups. Other colleagues were treated as work colleagues in school. The relationship among teachers were more related to their official capacities. Sometimes, distant relationship among teachers was also evident. Competitions and conflicting views between different informal groups were at times surfaced. This to a certain extent had rather negative impact on the working environment. It was not surprising that a sense of disengagement was induced among teachers.

Morale of teachers was observed to be low when compared to that of ABC School. This might be contributed by a number of factors. The first set of factors was related to the unfavorable working environment in terms of intimacy and disengagement as well as the physical environment. The next factor was the quality of students' educational outcomes. With the present poor students' achievement, their sense of accomplishment and satisfaction would be low (please refer to the observations on teachers' work characteristics). Thus, a relatively low level of esprit among was expected.

It was observed that teachers generally experienced a rather high level of work hindrance. This might be contributed by two factors. The first one was the system wide hindrance, as outlined in the description of ABC School, actually imposed by the central education authority and could not be easily reduced at the school level. Another factor might be related to the weak structural and educational leadership of the principal. In teachers' view, the whole school was not well structured. Rules, work procedures as well as the responsibilities of staff members (including those support staff) were not clear and known to every one in the school. This inevitably generated hindrance to work among staff members as a whole. On the other hand, teacher would easily feel the sense of being hindered when their ideas of improving teaching could not be materialized simply because of the indifferent attitude of their principal. Working in a school like this, teachers would certainly experience a high level hindrance at work, if they were aggressive.

Because of the weak leadership of the principal, teachers generally indicated that their principal would not interfere into their normal teaching and work even though new ideas at times were often not endorsed by the head. This provided a rather good base for building up a soft social relationship between the head and his staff. Teachers reported that they had learnt not to be

aggressive and were able to work peacefully with the head. The work life in this school was reported to be easy and without pressure In general, the relationship between the head and teachers were fairy good since the head had no rigorous work requirements of the teachers and the teachers were used to live up with the present work relationship with the head. In sum, this relationship was based on the "easy work life" in the school.

We see that ABC School had a relatively favorable staff relationship than XYZ school. Regarding principal-teacher relationship, we should a bit cautious in interpreting the reported good relationship. It should also be noted that the good relationships in both schools were basically built on different grounds as outlined above. Basically, the good relationship in ABC School was developed from the positive and healthy working environment. Rather contradictory, the "good" relationship in XYZ School was generate from the relatively "easy work life" environment in the school. Tiring the observations to students' achievement in both schools, it seemed that this identified variations in staff relationship might also be one of the factors that had impact on the effectiveness of schools.

**Principal Performance**

According to the leadership conceptions of Bolman & Deal (1991), Sergiovanni (1984) and Cheng (1994b), this section describes the characteristics and their potential influences of school principals' leadership. The leadership dimensions to be studied include human leadership, structural leadership, political leadership, symbolic leadership, and educational leadership. Human leadership relates to the extent the principal is supportive and fosters participation. Structural leadership refers to the extent the principal develops clear goals, policies and organizational structure and holds people accountable for results. Political leadership is the extent to which the principal is persuasive and effective at building alliances and solving conflicts. Symbolic leadership is the extent to which the principal is inspirational and charismatic; and educational leadership refers to the principal's emphasis and encouragement of professional development and teaching improvement.

**ABC School**

The principal of ABC school, Mr. White, had been working in this school for 21 years. Prior to his present appointment as head four years ago, he worked as deputy head and teacher. He

received his professional training from teacher college. He also did a certificate in organizational management. He viewed that the study in management helped him a lot in managing the school.

Mr. White reported that in daily work, he invested a lot of efforts in building up clear task goals, policies and organizational structure that held staff members accountable for results. Teachers also indicated that he was most careful and sensitive to possible design faults of school programs. Moreover, he emphasized formal organizational structure. Observations indicated that the school had quite a number of rules and regulations, work procedures, and records of meetings.

Apart from the above identified strong structural leadership, he also demonstrated dominant educational leadership. He encouraged teachers to attend courses or training programs that were good for professional development. He also focused his attention on teaching methodology, program design and any other ideas that might enhance the quality of education service provided by the school.

Regarding human leadership and symbolic leadership, he did not focus too much of his attention on them. Though, at times, he tried to understand the needs of staff members and listen to teachers proposal and ideas. Yet, he did not frequently invite teachers to participate in the decision making of school policies. On the other hand, he did not demonstrate himself to have invested too much effort in sustaining school missions and culture. Teachers reported that they were not clear of the school goals and mission but they were committed to the ongoing education tasks. They also expressed that Mr. White did not attempt to resolve conflicts among members of the staff nor built up alliance in the school.

To sum up, Mr. White was a strong structural and educational leader. His efforts in structural aspect of management might have a modeling effect to his teachers. Observations and reports from students indicated that teachers were clear in setting up rules and systematic in organizing learning activities. Moreover, his structural leadership might to a certain extent have influence on the schools' general good arrangements. This in turn gained students' high level of extrinsic satisfaction. The effect of his educational leadership was rather obvious. Firstly, we could not deny that his educational leadership had given teachers the chances to develop and experiment innovative ideas. This might be validated by the observation that teachers under his leadership had a strong feeling of job challenge, job meaningfulness and job responsibility. The last but not the least was students sound educational outcomes.

**XYZ School**

Mr. Black, the principal, was an experienced school head. He had been working in this school for 33 years with 28 years as head. He had a master degree and a diploma in education, yet he did not receive any management training.

According to observations, Mr. Black was a principal who did not demonstrate strong leadership. He did not focus on organizational structure. He did not have good practice to define clear goals and structure to hold teachers accountable to outcomes. Teachers indicated that as long as rules and regulations were concerned, he was a rather care-free head. Educational leadership was also not dominant. Though, he sometimes encouraged teachers to attend professional development programs, his effort was not persistent. He seldom took an active role in leading teachers to improve teaching and program design. However, he did endorse teachers' proposal which convinced him.

According to teachers, he treasured human relationship and needs of staff members. He also invited teachers to participate in the decision making process. Yet, he did not demonstrate himself to be consistent and persistent. He was also not a good negotiator nor effective in resolving conflicts among staff members. This school had no clear school goals and mission made known to teachers. Teachers were basically ignorance of school mission. In fact, Mr. Black reported that even he himself did not have a specific mission for the school.

To line things up, Mr. Black was not a strong leader in terms structural, educational, human, symbolic and political aspects. His weak leadership might to a certain extent make his school unpopular and ineffective. Let us take structural leadership and educational leadership as two examples. His weak structural leadership to a certain degree had negative impact on the general school arrangements which did not meet the needs of both teachers and students. Weak educational leadership might be one of the many causes that pushed teachers to a state of helplessness. This very state of professional helplessness in turns might cast negative effect on students' learning. Thus, unfavorable students' educational outcomes might then be expected.

Mr. White of ABC school was obviously a strong leader in two aspects: structural and educational, while Mr. Black of XYZ school was a rather weak leader. The differentiation between their leadership forces, not mentioning the management training of the heads, might be one of the many causes that make the two schools so different.

## Parental Influence

Parental influence on students' performance and the actual parental participation in school activities were the two foci of investigation in this section. Hong Kong is a highly competitive society. Academic attainment is the crucial factor when people compete for a job. This has directed the Hong Kong education system to be achievement oriented. Thus, parental expectations on students' academic achievements are very dominant in Hong Kong, and the variation in parental expectations are very small, particularly in primary schools.

Students of the two schools generally viewed that their parents loved them and they were happy to live with their families. It was noted some students of XYZ School had rather negative view of their families and parents. However, this was not a general pattern. Regarding parental expectations, the observations were in line with the general expectations of the mass public in Hong Kong. Majority of the students reported that their parents expected them to be competent in studies and to study in the university later. This was evident in both schools. However, some students in XYZ School reported also their parents only expected them to complete secondary education. This was easily understood since the academic achievements of XYZ School's students were far lower than that of ABC School, and if parents were realistic they would certainly re-adjust their expectations.

Parents association or parents-teachers association in Hong Kong is not common. Many schools do not establish such associations, despite the persistent promotion of home-school cooperation by the central education authority. According to the researchers' general observations, one of the many reasons is that the school administration does not want parents to "interfere" into the school's "own" management. In the present study, we found that ABC School had founded its parents association while XYZ School did not. One of the reasons that made this difference might be the leadership of the principal. It was described above that practically XYZ School seemed to operate as if it was "headless" (Cheng, 1991). The principal of XYZ School might not have the determination and competence to start up parents association in which the school might meet the challenges from parents. However, this was not confirmed by the principal.

Communications between teachers and parents in both schools were more or less "one-way" and normally took the forms of students' handbooks, school notices and letters to parents, parents' day, open day; and teacher interviewing parents. These were basically initiated either by the school or the teacher. It should be noted that teachers would normally initiate an interview with parents when serious academic or behavioral problems of students were identified. Interviewing

parents to inform them of the good work of their children were rarely arranged. Regarding the usefulness of informing parents of students' problems, teachers from both schools had a rather convergent view that it was useful. It was useful in a sense that parents were generally eager to help rectifying the "problems".

The observations in parental influence suggested that variations were small. However, concerning teacher-parent collaboration, the work of ABC School was more encouraging. Apart from the normal channels of communicating with parents, it also collaborated with parents in the parents association. We have reasons to believe that the comparatively more teacher-parent collaborations might to a certain extent help the development of students. Thus, this variation in home-school cooperation practice may also give us ground to compare the effectiveness of the two schools.

## School Organizational Characteristics

The school organizational characteristics such as normalization, participation in decision making, strength of organization culture, and external relations are often believed to important to school effectiveness. According to Oldman & Hackman (1981), Hage & Aiken (1967) and Cheng (1994b), formalization refers to the level of school functioning being formalized with clear written policies, procedures and records. Participation is the level of teacher participating in school decision making and planning. Organization culture is the extent to which staff share values, beliefs and assumptions about school mission, teaching, learning and management (Price & Mueller, 1986; Cheng, 1993). In this section, these organizational characteristics of ABC school and XYZ school were compared and discussed.

### ABC School

*Formalization.* Formalization characteristics of ABC school was very obvious. The school had a good collection of clear written policies, procedures and records. Staff members were expected to work according to these rules and procedures. It was not surprising to have this clear formalization characteristics for ABC School, since the school head possessed a strong structural leadership.

*Participation in Decision Making.* The level of teacher participation in school planning and decision was low. Decision making concerning school policies and plans was only done by a few

senior teachers and the school head. Normally, extensive consultation of school policies and plans were not available. Teachers were only given the chance to voice their opinion in panel meetings. Staff meeting seemed to be an occasion for the management to announce the decided policies.

*Organizational Culture*. Organizational culture was not too strong. In fact, the school head did not demonstrate strong cultural leadership. However, under the strong educational leadership of the school head, teachers were able to accomplish their attempts in good teaching and other related activities to provide quality education services to students. Thus, teachers as the main force of culture development had successfully built in a moderate culture in which an environment of nurturing collegiality was evident. Observations supported the above inference. Within the school environment, discussions on teaching methodology were observed. Stories of outstanding students and graduates were told frequently to students. Traditions of winning prizes in inter-school competitions, such as music festival, speech contest and ball games were deep in the mind of students and teachers.

*External Relations*. External relations of the school was built mainly by the school principal. He participated in a number of community services and related working groups. Some of them were the advisory committee of district affairs, the joint school association, and the church. Students also participated in activities like the previous mentioned inter-school competitions, social services activities, and fund raising activities for the aged.

**XYZ School**

*Formalization*. As mentioned in the previous section, the structural leadership of the principal of XYZ school was weak. It was therefore not strange to see that formalization characteristics of this school was not clear. Written policies, procedures and records were not always available. Sometimes, rules and procedures were not clear and explicitly written. Staff members very often did not have rules and procedures to follow. They worked on their experience. Thus, new staff members were most confused in this school.

*Participation in Decision Making*. Same as ABC School, the level of teacher participation was rather low. Decision making concerning school policies and plans was only done by the senior teachers and the head. Extensive consultation was not available. Staff meetings and panel meetings were occasions the management to announce the decided policies. Variations between the two schools were limited.

*Organizational Culture.* According to observation, there was a culture of "helpless and headless" in XYZ school. We note previously that the school head did not demonstrate strong leadership and teachers felt helpless in the work. This helpless feeling was intensified by the "mutual negative influence" between teachers and students (please refer to the section on Teacher Work Characteristics). Teachers generally felt that they could do nothing to improve students' achievement. Moreover, many low achieving students had also such feeling of helplessness about their own academic competence. Stories of graduates who did extremely poor were often told among teachers. Whenever, they lost in an inter-school competition, excuses would be made that it was their tradition to lose.

*External Relations.* External relations of the school was built mainly by the school principal. Relatively, his participation in community services and related working groups was less active than that of ABC School. He only participated in the joint school association and the church. Students participated also in activities like the previous mentioned inter-school competitions, social services activities, and fund raising activities for the aged. However, it was not too frequent.

From above, we can see that the major differences between ABC school and XYZ school lie on the areas of formalization, school culture, and external relations. These variations had already provided a sound ground for us to infer how ABC School was different from XYZ School in school functioning and outcomes.

## Conclusion

Demographically, ABC school and XYZ school were very similar. They were located in old districts with students from moderately low social-economic status background. Both of them have standard resource inputs (e.g. financial support, salary, human resource, school building and facilities, etc.) from the Hong Kong government Apparently, XYZ School was a bit favorable in terms of location, class size, and physical environments. Unfortunately, with these favorable conditions, XYZ School did not promise better performance than ABC School in terms of students' academic achievements, attitudes and satisfactions in school. Surprisingly, in the perceptions of students and teachers, the physical environment of XYZ school was even perceived as poor but that of ABC as satisfactory. On contrast, the physical conditions and external environment of ABC school was comparatively unfavorable, it was perceived by its students and teachers as acceptable

and satisfactory and its students' performance was much better than that of XYZ school. The finding supports the belief that the input physical conditions may not be the dominant factor for school effectiveness, particularly when compared with the effects of internal school process.

In the analysis presented above, we found that there were contrastingly differences between the effective school ABC and ineffective school XYZ in terms of student performance, classroom climate, extra-curricular activity, teacher work performance, principal leadership, staff relationship, and school organizational characteristics, as summarized in Table 3. In the effective school ABC, students positive attitudes towards their own selves, peers, teachers, school, and learning and were more satisfied with the social relationships with peers and teachers, the opportunities to learn, perform and develop, the school's arrangements and facilities. They also had very good academic achievements in Chinese language, English language, and mathematics.

Even though the curriculum content was standard and the teaching methods were teacher-centered in both effective and ineffective schools, the quantity and quality of student participation in extra-curricular activities are very different in these schools. If we believe that extra-curricular activities are also the core part of school education, we can see that the extra-curricular activities in ABC school had made a very important contribution to the effectiveness of this school but that in XYZ school did not.

In classrooms of ABC school, the social climate was good, directing to effective instruction and learning activities. Students had close affiliation and positive competition in learning; showed involvement in learning activities; and felt good support from their teachers. In classroom, teachers had good command of instructional activities and student concentration; established clear classroom rules for students and maintained good order and organization in classroom. They were also innovative in their teaching and effective in using class time. They had stronger professional power but less coercive power to influence students. The profile of classroom in ABC school is very positive but that in XYZ school is weak. The findings support the importance of classroom climate to the educational effectiveness and they are consistent with the past studies of classroom climate and impacts ( Knight, 1990; Waxman, Knight & Owens, 1990; Waxman, Huang, Knight & Owens, 1992; Cheng, 1994a).

*Table 3: Profiles of Effective and Ineffective Schools*

| | Effective School ABC | Ineffective School XYZ |
|---|---|---|
| **Student Performance** | | |
| Attitude to self | Positive | less positive |
| Attitude to peers | positive | positive |
| Attitude to teachers | positive | less positive |
| Attitude to school | positive | less positive |
| Attitude to learning | positive | less positive |
| Social satisfaction | satisfied | less satisfied |
| Intrinsic satisfaction | satisfied | less satisfied |
| Extrinsic satisfaction | satisfied | not satisfied |
| Chinese language achievement | high | low |
| English language achievement | high | low |
| Mathematics achievement | high | low |
| **Curriculum Delivery** | | |
| Curriculum content | standard / same | standard / same |
| Teaching methods | teacher-centered | teacher-centered |
| Extra-curricular activities: | | |
| Types of activities | 20 | 14 |
| % of students participated | 80% | 60% |
| Participation in outside occasions | 20 occasions, 102 prizes | 9 occasions, 5 prizes |
| **Classroom Climate** | | |
| Perceived physical environment | moderately good | poor |
| Affiliation | close | relatively distant |
| Competition | moderate | moderate |
| Involvement | moderate | barely involved |
| Teacher support | good | moderate |
| Teacher control | strong | moderate |
| Rule clarity | clear | moderate |
| Order and organization | good | rather weak |
| Task orientation | good | rather weak |
| Innovation | good | rather weak |
| % of class time for teaching | around 75 % | around 50% |
| % of class time for handling student behavioral problems | less 25 % | 25% to 49% |
| Teachers' professional power | dominant | moderate |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Teachers' position power | dominant | dominant |
| Teachers' reward power | weakly displayed | weakly displayed |
| Teachers' coercive power | weak | relatively stronger |
| Teachers' personal power | moderate | moderate |
| **Teacher Satisfactions and Attitudes** | | |
| Social satisfaction | moderate | very low |
| Extrinsic satisfaction | moderate | low |
| Intrinsic satisfaction | moderately high | very low |
| Influence satisfaction | moderate | very low |
| Job commitment | slightly low | low |
| Feeling of job challenge | moderate | moderate |
| Feeling of job meaning | moderate | low |
| Feeling of job responsibility | moderate | moderate |
| **Staff Relationship** | | |
| Intimacy | high | low |
| Esprit | high | moderately low |
| Disengagement | low | moderately low |
| Hindrance | moderately low | high |
| Principal-teacher relationship | good | good |
| **Principal Performance** | | |
| Human leadership | moderate | weak |
| Structural leadership | strong | weak |
| Political leadership | weak | weak |
| Symbolic leadership | moderate | weak |
| Educational leadership | strong | weak |
| **Parental Influence** | | |
| Parent expectations | slightly high | moderate |
| Parents association | yes | no |
| **School Organizational Characteristics** | | |
| Formalization | good | weak |
| Participation | low | low |
| Organization culture | positive - nurturing | negative- helpless |
| External relations | active | less active |
| **School physical conditions** | | |
| Resource inputs from the government | standard, same | standard, same |
| Location, class size, external environment | unfavorable | favorable |
| Perceived school environment | satisfactory | poor |

Undoubtedly, teachers are the major actors directly contributing to students' learning in school. Their satisfactions and attitudes in school can affect their teaching performance and so student's educational outcome. In the effective school ABC, teachers were moderately satisfied with the social relationships with colleagues, the opportunities to professional development and participation in school decision making, and the school arrangements and fringe benefits. But in XYZ school, teachers were in general dissatisfied in nearly every aspect. In terms of job attitudes, teachers in ABC school seemed to feel more meaningfulness in their job than those in XYZ school. The pattern of staff relationships at the school level was also different between the effective school and ineffective school. In ABC school, teachers had more intimate relationships among colleagues and their team spirit was higher. They felt less disengaged and less burdened with unnecessary workload. On contrast, the social relationships in XYZ school were poor and teacher's team morale was low. Teachers felt strongly burdened with meaningless workload. The findings support the importance of contribution of staff satisfactions, job attitudes, and social relationships to school performance.

The principal's leadership in the effective school ABC was clearly stronger particularly in the structural and educational aspects, when compared with that in ineffective school XYZ. In general, the findings are consistent with the leadership literature ( Sergiovanni, 1994; Bolman & Deal, 1991; Cheng, 1994b; Hallinger and Murphy, 1987; Chan & Cheng, 1993). But, the political leadership of both effective and ineffective schools was weak. This might be different from the findings obtained in the Western countries. In the tradition of Hong Kong, principals in general have a very strong formal authority to suppress potential conflicts and different opinions from staff and also teachers tend to more patient and compliant. It may not be surprising that the principals of these two schools may not need to build any coalitions and exercise political tactics to handle school conflicts and diverse interests. The popular belief of critical contribution of strong leadership to school effectiveness has been supported in this study.

Parallel to the finding about principal's structural leadership, the functioning of effective school ABC was formalized with clear school policies, procedures, and working plans. This could help the school members know clearly what and how they should do. ABC school also had a stronger school culture that can shape and maintain school members' working morale, values and beliefs about education. But the ineffective school XYZ lacked systematic policies and plans to guide school members' work and the school was in an atmosphere of helplessness. This phenomenon was probably due to the very weak leadership of the school principal. It is interesting

to note that teacher participation in school decision making was low in both effective and ineffective school. It seemed that teacher participation in decision making might not be so important to predict school effectiveness in the context of Hong Kong. This may need further exploration.

These two case studies suggest that school can make a difference in student performance. Even though the input resources or the physical environments may be less favorable, a school can produce better educational outcomes through the appropriate internal school process and efforts of its school members. The profiles of effective and ineffective schools identified in this study can provide an useful pattern to understand schooling process and improve school practice. Hopefully, the findings can contribute to the further research on school effectiveness and school improvement in both local and international contexts.

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